

September 28, 2000

Cases from Virginia: McIntyre, Morton, and Rogers

Are Government-Defined “Hate Crimes” Different? Do Their Victims Suffer More?

Last week in Roanoke, Virginia, a man opened fire in what has been described as a gay bar and killed Danny Lee Overstreet and wounded six others. Although crime rates are dropping across the nation, the Roanoke crime will be among the 400-or-so murders and 12,000-or-so aggravated assaults that will be committed in the Commonwealth of Virginia this year.

Some believe that the Roanoke crime was unlike all of the other murders and assaults that have occurred in Virginia, and they want the Roanoke crime to provoke an extraordinary remedy — the passage of a federal “hate-crimes” law. Accordingly, they have begun using the Roanoke shooting as a crowbar to help pry “hate-crimes” language out of the conference on the Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 4205), where it has been parked for a couple of months. President Clinton and Vice President Gore are a part of this effort.

The advocates of a federal hate-crimes law know how to leverage the news, even the most tragic news. Mr. Overstreet’s associates and even his union already are calling for enactment of a federal “hate-crimes” law, and their voices are being heard on Capitol Hill. It’s unfortunate that *all* of Virginia’s (and America’s) crime victims don’t have those kinds of connections. Someday, though, the family and friends and neighbors and sympathizers of Shanna McIntyre, Kenze Morton, Robyn Rogers, and the 1.5 million other victims of violent crimes that occur annually will be heard, and they are going to want to know why *their* tragedies do not count with Congress.

McIntyre, Morton, and Rogers are dead — but their cases were considered by Virginia’s criminal justice system within the past few weeks, the same season in which Danny Lee Overstreet was shot dead. McIntyre, Morton, and Rogers are largely unknown, however; they have no lobby on Capitol Hill. We have summarized their stories below. After reading the gruesome facts, one must wonder why the pending “hate-crimes” language doesn’t include the kind of hatred and violence that brought McIntyre, Morton, and Rogers to their end.

The Murder and Dismemberment of 12-year-old Shanna McIntyre: Not a Government-Defined “Hate Crime”. On September 11, 2000, a man pleaded guilty to the murder and dismemberment of Shanna McIntyre, age 12, of Norfolk. He will be sentenced on December 1. The murderer’s lawyers have asked for life imprisonment, and the prosecution has asked for the death penalty. According to the *Virginian-Pilot* of September 23 and 24, 2000, one prosecutor said that the murderer had committed “the worst possible crime against our society” by “invading the last sanctuary — the bedroom of a child.”

The murder occurred in August of 1999 when the man, a friend of the family, entered Shanna McIntyre's bedroom in the middle of the night, smothered her, kidnapped her, sexually assaulted her, and then dismembered her and strewed her body parts along a road in Virginia Beach. Her remains were discovered nine days later.

The pending "hate-crimes" language would *not* make the murder and dismemberment of Shanna McIntyre an official government-defined "hate crime". Evidently, the kidnapping, rape, murder, and dismemberment of a child stolen from her own bedroom is *not* the kind of crime that is thought to have an especially powerful impact on a community.

The Murder and Disappearance of 4-year-old Kenze Morton: Not a Government-Defined "Hate Crime". On August 3, 2000, a man was sentenced for the 1997 Christmas Eve murder of Kenze Morton, his 4-year-old nephew who had been placed in his custody by a court. The man's wife had been sentenced in March. According to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* of August 5, 2000, the husband and wife confessed to killing Kenze after the boy "acted up" in their Norfolk apartment. The wife said she lost her patience and tied the boy up and shoved him in a cupboard. Later, the husband "stuffed a skull cap into Kenze's mouth" and the wife "strangled the child and went to bed." Two days later, the couple put the boy into a weighted duffel bag and threw his body into the Chesapeake Bay. They then moved to New York State. Their crime wasn't discovered until Kenze's jawbone washed up on the beach a year later.

The pending "hate-crimes" language would *not* make the abuse and murder of Kenze Morton an official government-defined "hate crime". Evidently, a helpless little kid does *not* belong to one of those classes of victims that are entitled to special solicitude.

The Disfigurement and Murder of Robyn Lynn Rogers: Not a Government-Defined "Hate Crime". Robyn Lynn Rogers, age 29, died August 10, 2000, three weeks after she was attacked with a powerful caustic liquid that was thrown in her face. Two men have been arrested. According to the *Washington Post* of August 21, 2000, investigators were not certain what the liquid was, but they described it as the most caustic base liquid available, with a pH level of 14, the highest on the scale. The liquid badly burned Mrs. Rogers's esophagus which had to be removed. Her face was disfigured and her stomach and intestines were badly damaged. She could not eat, speak, or see. Three weeks and eight operations later, she died.

The pending "hate-crimes" language would *not* make the disfigurement and murder of Robyn Lynn Rogers an official government-defined "hate crime". Evidently, the kind of evil-encrusted murderousness shown in the attack on Mrs. Rogers is *not* the kind of politically incorrect hatred that requires the passage of new "hate-crimes" laws.

There are many problems with the "hate-crimes" language that is on the Defense Authorization Act, but one of the worst is the blatant, purposeful discrimination against the victims of the thousands of crimes that are even more ugly, even more brutal, and even more harmful to the family and the community than are the handful of crimes that are committed because of politically incorrect motive. How is it possible for the Congress of the United States to write a *hate-crimes* bill that excludes McIntyre, Morton, and Rogers?